

Even more Bourdieu

1. The critique in *On Television*. Focussed on the situation in France, B is able to pinpoint and diagnose from the immediate symptoms of change that he has observed, lived through. In many ways, what he notices and what he criticizes could be seen in US television of the 1960s and 70s.

What he doesn't remark about which seems so definitive in the US, especially since about 1968 or so, is the way that news, journalism, politics, is increasingly displaced from substance (he does notice this trend) in the specific form not of a peculiar non-substantive debate (which he also identifies), but specifically on making the media itself the central player in everything. We could (almost arbitrarily) assign the start of this to the postmortem analysis of the 1968 Presidential election in *The Selling of the President* by _____. This book traced the electoral campaign by an extended detailing of the behind the scenes media manipulation of the entire campaign. Subsequently, every political campaign has been marked by an increasing attention to not the issues, nor even the candidates and their personalities, but to the nature of the media's coverage. And in an increasingly circular and self-absorbed way, the meta-analysis of the media's analysis of its own job. The current preoccupation with bloggers, who endlessly watch media-staged news events, and who then "make news" by commenting on those events, who are then responded to and amplified by the array of 24 hour cable news channel pundits, etc. etc. thus the news is even less about what the President, or Secretary of Defense, or Secretary of State actually did during the week, but on what the White House press secretary said at a news conference or what the cabinet secretaries said on a Sunday morning public affairs show such as *Meet the Press*. Even natural disasters such as the Asian tsunami or Atlantic coast hurricanes are quickly reported, and then shortly into the news cycle we begin to get reports of how the media are covering the story.

"Embedded reporters" travel with the troops into (actually slightly behind) combat, and depending for their lives on these protectors, report from a particular side. The reporter becomes the story. Dramatic re-enactments continue the mythology: Peter Arnett reporting "love from Baghdad during the first Gulf War" is then turned into a dramatic made-for-TV movie before the second war in Iraq.

2. Critical voices within television. While B identifies the problem of a lack of substantive critical content, if we look at US television, we can find some social/political criticism in the work of some standup comedians, and a few shows, such as *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. While Jay Leno is noted for making jokes at the expense of politicians throughout his career, the jokes are largely based on personal matters, such as "private" sexual behavior with George W. Bush and President Clinton, rather than issues of policy or substance. The current "controversy" about Chris Rock hosting the Academy Awards ceremonies has to do with (from the Right) the idea that he is too edgy, too open, too confrontational in identifying political problems, especially around issues of race. But it is the case that one can say things with comedy that could not be

said on television in any other accessible form. (The exception to the rule being C-SPAN and public access television).